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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**DISBARRED CHARLES COUNTY LAWYER SENTENCED TO 3 YEARS
FOR SCHEME DEFRAUDING CLIENTS' ESTATES**

Greenbelt, Maryland - Thomas M. DiBiagio, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced that today U.S. District Court Judge Deborah K. Chasanow sentenced William B. Ellinger, age 70, of LaPlata, Maryland to 3 years in prison followed by 5 years of supervised release, following his guilty plea on February 2, 2004 to two counts of mail fraud and three counts of wire fraud arising from a six year scheme to defraud money from the estates of his clients. Ellinger was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$578,360.05.

In a statement of facts previously provided to the court as part of the plea agreement, Ellinger admitted that between March 1996 and at least July 2002, while practicing law under the professional association of Mitchell & Ellinger in LaPlata Maryland, he defrauded the estates of Harlan McGregor, Velva H. Perrygo, George Lindsay and Elizabeth Epp. Ellinger would maintain the check book for the bank account of each estate. Ellinger wrote unauthorized checks on the estate accounts payable to Mitchell & Ellinger and deposited the checks into his law firm account. In some instances Ellinger forged the signature of the estate's personal representative and/or the beneficiary

listed on the insurance disbursements and deposited the proceeds into the law firm account. Ellinger withdrew the funds from the law firm account for his personal use. To conceal the fraud, Ellinger prepared and filed false accounting statements with the Orphans Court of Charles County, Maryland.

Charles County State's Attorney Leonard Collins referred this matter for federal investigation which was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Charles County Sheriff's Office. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Deborah A. Johnston.